

Health Policy Committee Members

RE: HB 4597 - 4600

My name is Lisa Espinoza, and I am the mother of a nine year old son who is autistic. I spoke last week to the committee in my support of HB 4183 and 4476 for the autism insurance legislation. I am in support of the HB 4597, 4598, 4599, and 4600. I believe all people with mental health issues should be entitled to adequate insurance coverage to treat their disorders.

I want to clarify misconceptions between the mental health parity bills and the autism bills.

- Mental Health Parity and Autism Treatment Coverage are two separate issues.
- **Mental Health Parity will not benefit the people who are diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder).** The mental health parity legislation requires insurance companies to provide the same coverage for individuals with mental health care coverage as it does for individuals with medical coverage. Autism is not covered under either insurance coverage therefore, they will continue to not cover autism treatments.
- **Mental Health Parity bills are not sufficient to get insurance companies to cover treatments** – Autism is a specialized condition that has specialized treatments that are required to be specifically stated to require the insurance companies to cover the treatments.
 - Currently there are 47 states that have passed some form of mental health parity law, but the parity laws are not sufficient in getting the treatments covered.
 - Of these 47 states...
 - 12 states have passed additional legislation covering treatment of autism.
 - 23 states have autism legislation introduced.
 - 8 states have autism legislation either pending or under development.

I am very compassionate and support the mental health parity. Though these are two separate issues, the true victims are both the autistic and mentally impaired individuals. The families that do not receive enough treatments feel the same desperation that the autism community feels with not receiving any coverage.

Thank you,


Lisa Espinoza